

March 19, 2019

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Director Wray,

We, the undersigned national civil rights and faith-based leaders, write to express our deep concern regarding recent attacks against our houses of worship and communities. We request an urgent meeting with you to discuss the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in addressing the threat to public safety and our communities by white nationalist violence.

Attacks against houses of worship in the United States have been far too common in recent years. For example, in 2012, white supremacist Wade Michael Page murdered six and injured four, when he stormed a Sikh gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. In 2015, Dylann Roof, who spewed deep racial hatred and espoused white nationalist ideals, entered the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine individuals. In 2018, Robert D. Bowers burst into the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and shouted anti-Semitic slurs, killing 11 worshippers. This hate manifested itself again last week in New Zealand, when Brenton Harrison Tarrant live streamed his attacks against Masjid al-Noor and the Linwood Mosque in Christchurch where he murdered over 50 people and injured many more. Tarrant too, was a virulent white nationalist, and even cited Roof as an inspiration in his manifesto.

Last year, the FBI reported a 17% increase in hate crimes overall since 2016, marking an increase for the third consecutive year in a row. Given the enormous threat of hate violence to our communities and our nation, we request that you meet with us along with our partners in the civil rights and faith communities to discuss the FBI's role in protecting houses of worship, our communities, and all Americans.

Please contact Muslim Advocates deputy director Naheed Qureshi at 202-897-2622 or naheed@muslimadvocates.org to discuss details for scheduling this meeting.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss our concerns further.

Sincerely,

Farhana Khera, President & Executive Director, Muslim Advocates
Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director, Religious Action Center; Senior V.P., Union for Reform Judaism
Sherrilyn Ifill, President & Director-Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Vanita Gupta, President & CEO, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Satjeet Kaur, Executive Director, The Sikh Coalition